

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BRUSSE 06953 281559Z
ACTION EUR-08

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 PM-03 SP-02

L-01 INR-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 /039 W
-----112952 281832Z /53

R 281551Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0550
INFO AMEMBASSY MADRID
USMISSION NATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 06953

LIMDIS

NOFORN

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, NATO, SP, BE
SUBJECT: BELGIAN GOVERNMENT VIEWS ON SPAIN AND NATO

REF: MADRID 4751

SUMMARY: FOREIGN MINISTRY CHIEF OF NATO AFFAIRS, ERIK BAL
SUMMARIZES CURRENT BELGIAN GOVERNMENT VIEWS ON HOW TO
TREAT ISSUE OF SPAIN'S POSSIBLE MEMBERSHIP IN NATO.
BELGIANS SUGGEST PATIENCE AND NO NATO OR NATO COUNTRY
INITIATIVES TO THAT END. END SUMMARY.

1. THE BELGIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY HAS JUST COMPLETED A
REVIEW OF HOW TO ACHIEVE THE ULTIMATE GOAL OF HAVING
SPAIN JOIN NATO FOR THE NEW SOCIALIST FOREIGN MINISTER
HENRI SIMONET. THE BELGIAN ANALYSIS OF PRESENT POST-
ELECTORAL SITUATION IN SPAIN, WHICH WAS REVIEWED WITH
US, IS STRIKINGLY SIMILAR TO THAT PROVIDED REFTEL.

2. FROM THEIR ANALYSIS, THE BELGIANS HAVE DRAWN THE
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FOLLOWING GENERAL CONCLUSIONS:

(A) IN ORDER FOR SPAIN TO BECOME AN EFFECTIVE MEMBER
OF NATO, SPAIN'S MEMBERSHIP SHOULD NOT BE A POLITICAL ISSU
BETWEEN THE TWO MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES. WHEN SPAIN JOINS
NATO, IT SHOULD DO SO WITH AS MUCH OF A DOMESTIC POLITICAL
CONSENSUS AS POSSIBLE.

(B) THE PSOE IS A Viable, moderately leftist, alternative to the middle of the road UCD. AS SUCH, THE PSOE IS A VALUABLE ELEMENT FOR THE LONGTERM FUNCTIONING OF DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS IN SPAIN. (AN ELEMENT THE BELGIANS NOTE IS LACKING IN ITALY.) THE WEST SHOULD TREAT THE PSOE AS SUCH AND NOT SEEK SHORT-TERM ADVANTAGES WITH THE UCD WHICH MIGHT SERVE TO PROMPT AN UNFAVORABLE REACTION FROM THE PSOE.

(C) PRESENT POLITICS IN SPAIN ARE BEING PLAYED OUT AGAINST A RENEWED SENSE OF PRIDE, BORDERING ON ARROGANCE. SPANISH PRIDE IS BASED PARTLY ON NATIONAL TRADITIONS, PARTLY ON A JUSTIFIED SENSE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT IN PEACEFULLY CONVERTING THE GOVERNMENT FROM A DICTATORSHIP INTO A DEMOCRACY. ALL ELEMENTS IN THE SPANISH POLITICAL SPECTRUM ARE AFFECTED TO SOME EXTENT BY THIS PHENOMENON, WHICH ADDS TO THE DIFFICULTIES IN TREATING WITH THEM. IT IS A MAJOR FACTOR AND MUST BE TAKEN INTO FULL ACCOUNT.

3. THE BELGIANS BELIEVE THAT THERE IS A GOOD CHANCE THAT THE PSOE CAN BE BROUGHT AROUND TO A POSITION FAVORING SPAIN'S MEMBERSHIP IN NATO GIVEN SUFFICIENT TIME AND THE PROPER TACTICS. THEY BELIEVE THAT NATO COUNTRIES SHOULD REFRAIN FROM PRESSING SPAIN ON NATO MEMBERSHIP, BUT OPEN AS MANY CHANNELS AS POSSIBLE TO SHOW THE ADVANTAGES OF

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MEMBERSHIP AND LET THE SPANISH DRAW THEIR OWN CONCLUSIONS. THEY FURTHER BELIEVE THAT THE MILITARY ASPECTS OF NATO SHOULD BE PLAYED DOWN AND THE POLITICAL ALLIANCE/CONSULTATIVE MECHANISM ASPECT OF NATO AS A GROUP OF NORTH ATLANTIC DEMOCRACIES SHOULD BE EMPHASIZED.

4. IN THE BELGIAN VIEW, NATO SHOULD NOT UNDERTAKE AN ACTIVIST ROLE FOR THE MOMENT AND SHOULD NOT URGE SPAIN TO APPLY FOR MEMBERSHIP. FYI: THE BELGIANS ARE ONCERNED THAT NATO SECRETARY GENERAL LUNS MAY IGNORE THE DELICACY OF THE PRESENT SITUATION IN SPAIN AND COME OUT WITH A CHARACTERISTIC, BLUNT APPROACH WHICH WOULD NOT SERVE THE COMMON GOAL. END FYI. CHAMBERS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MEMBERSHIP, ALLIANCE, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 28-Jun-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977BRUSSE06953
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770230-1195
Format: TEL
From: BRUSSELS
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770611/aaaaajvk.tel
Line Count: 107
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: fc1c9e73-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: 77 MADRID 4751
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 11-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2012605
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BELGIAN GOVERNMENT VIEWS ON SPAIN AND NATO
TAGS: PFOR, PGOV, BE, SP, NATO
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/fc1c9e73-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009